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 RUEHC/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1243
 RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 874
 RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5154
 RUHJPC/USLO PEXING 368
 RUOHMR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 5898
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 C O N F I D E N T I A L

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN IN 1977: AN EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: DURING 1977, AFGHANISTAN'S SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE REMAINED UNDIMINISHED, THUS SATISFYING OUR FOREMOST POLICY GOAL HERE. PRESIDENT DAUD ALSO MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF AFGHAN STABILITY -- THEREBY HELPING TO FULFILL ANOTHER PRINCIPAL U.S. OBJECTIVE. AVOIDING THE TEMPTATION TO TAKE JENACHARGE OF PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL TURMOIL, DAUD CONTINUED TO NURTURE THE RAPPROCHMENT HE AND FORMER PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO HAD LAUNCHED IN 1976. HE WAS ALSO ABLE TO REACH A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT WITH IRAN OF THE ANGLD HELMAND WATERS DISPUTE.

2. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF U.S.-AFGHAN BILATERAL RELATIONS WERE: (A) ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMISSION TO COMBAT NARCOTICS; (B) AFGHAN SUPPORT IN THE UN ON THE GUAM AND PUERTO RICO ISSUES; AND (C) AN INVITATION FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO DAUD TO PAY A STATE VISIT TO THE U.S. END SUMMARY.

3. RELATIONS WITH THE US: U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS DURING 1977 WERE EXCELLENT. THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (GOA) FULFILLED AN OBLIGATION TO US TO ESTABLISH A JOINT COMMISSION TO CONTROL NARCOTICS PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING. UNLIKE 1976, WHEN THE GOA WENT BACK ON A COMMITMENT NOT TO OPPOSE US ON THE GUAM ISSUE, THE GOA GAVE US HELP IN THE 1977 UNGA ON BOTH GUAM AND PUERTO RICO ISSUES. DAUD ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO MAKE A STATE VISIT TO THE U.S. IN THE SUMMER OF 1978, FUNDING FOR THE U.S. MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR AFGHAN OFFICERS WAS DOUBLED IN AN EFFORT TO OFFSET -- ALBERT TO A MODEST DEGREE -- THE MASSIVE SOVIET PREDOMINANCE IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHAN ARMED FORCES.

4. AS USAID/AFGHANISTAN ENDEAVORED TO SHAPE ITS PROGRAMS TO MEET CONGRESSIONAL AND AID GUIDELINES, AFGHAN DISQUIETUDE WAS EXPRESSED OVER WHAT APPEARED TO THEM TO BE A RECEDING AMERICAN COMMITMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AREA. THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP FREQUENTLY REBINED LOCAL AND VISITING AMERICAN OFFICIALS THAT AFGHANISTAN WANTS A MORE VISIBLE AMERICAN AID PRESENCE TO OFFER SOME COUNTER BALANCE TO THE PREDOMINANT SOVIET PRESENCE IN THIS COUNTRY.

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5. AFGHAN OFFICIALS HAD TWO HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH THE US LEADERSHIP IN 1977. WHEN AMBASSADOR ABDEL WAHID KARIM PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS AT THE WHITE HOUSE ON JULY 27, PRESIDENT CARTER TOLD HIM: "THE UNITED STATES WAS FOLLOWED WITH INTEREST THE FORMATION OF YOUR NEW CONSTITUTION AND WE ARE PARTICULARLY AWARE OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS... WE ARE ALSO MUCH AWARE OF PRESIDENT DAQUD'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE. WE ARE READY TO HELP IN THIS EFFORT." THE PRESIDENT ALSO COMPLIMENTED THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN (GOA) ON THE ESTABLISHMENT TWO DAYS EARLIER OF THE NEW JOINT COMMISSION ON AFGHAN NARCOTICS MATTERS AND EXPRESSED HIS STRONG PERSONAL INTEREST IN NARCOTICS CONTROL.

6. SUBSEQUENTLY, ON OCTOBER 1, SHORTLY BEFORE THE UNGA SESSION, FOREIGN MINISTER WAHEED ABDULLAH MET WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY AHESTON. ABDULLAH WAS TOLD THAT THE US REGARDS THE OPIUM-PRODUCTION PROBLEM IN AFGHANISTAN AS "A HIGH PRIORITY ISSUE." (THIS VIEW WAS ECHOED BY SENATOR WILLIAM F. SCOTT OF VIRGINIA DURING HIS NOVEMBER VISIT TO KABUL, WHEN HE BLUNTLY TOLD DAQUD THAT FUTURE AMERICAN AID WAS CONDITIONED ON AFGHAN PERFORMANCE IN THE NARCOTICS-CONTROL AREA.) THE AMERICAN SIDE WAS ASSURED BY ABDULLAH THAT PRESIDENT DAQUD STANDS PERSONALLY BEHIND THE EFFORTS OF THE GOA IN THE OPIUM-CONTROL FIELD.

7. AT THAT SAME MEETING, ABDULLAH EXPLAINED THAT THE GOA WANTED A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION AND A VERY VISIBLE U.S. PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN. THE SECRETARY REPLIED THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTS THE INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF AFGHANISTAN AND WILL CONTINUE ITS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. SECRETARY VANCE FURTHER OPINED THAT OUR TWO PRESIDENTS SHOULD GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER, AND, IN THIS CONNECTION, HE EXTENDED A PRESIDENTIAL INVITATION FOR DAQUD TO MAKE A STATE VISIT TO THE US DURING THE SUMMER OF 1978. THE AFGHAN PRESIDENT SUBSEQUENTLY ACCEPTED THE INVITATION.

8. RELATIONS WITH THE USSR: AFGHANISTAN'S MOST IMPORTANT BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP CONTINUED TO BE THE SENSITIVE, BUT LUCRATIVE LINK WITH ITS MUCH NORTHERN NEIGHBOR. THE SOVIETS AVOIDED ANY APPEARANCE OF MEDDLING IN AFGHAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS -- AND MAINTAINED THEIR POSITION AS THE MAJOR AID DONOR TO AFGHANISTAN (MORE THAN ONE BILLION DOLLARS OVER THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY, COMPARED TO LESS THAN ONE-HALF BILLION FROM THE U.S.). ALTHOUGH NO SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL AID WAS COMMITTED BY THE SOVIETS IN 1977, THE TWO SIDES DID HOLD DISCUSSIONS IN APRIL ABOUT USES FOR THE OUTSTANDING \$700 MILLION OF SOVIET CREDITS ALREADY COMMITTED TO AFGHANISTAN. SOVIET MILITARY DELIVERIES TO AFGHANISTAN IN 1977 INCLUDED A FEW SIGNIFICANT NEW WEAPONS, SUCH AS SA-3 AND SA-7 SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES.

9. FROM APRIL 12 TO 15, DAQUD PAID WHAT BOTH SIDES STYLED AS A "ROUTINE" VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION (WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, WAS AMONG THE PRINCIPAL REASONS WHY DAQUD WAS SO EAGER TO GET AN INVITATION FROM US -- IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN WHAT THE GOA PERCEIVES

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AS A OPTICAL BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO GREATEST POWERS). DURING ITS MOSCOW SOJOURN, DADUDD'S PARTY SIGNED A NEW TWELVE-YEAR AGREEMENT TO DEVELOP AFGHAN-SOVIET ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS.

12. RELATIONS WITH CHINA: IN ORDER TO PROVIDE ANOTHER TYPE OF OPTICAL BALANCE TO DADUDD'S TRIP TO THE USSR, THE AFGHANS GOVERNMENT ON APRIL 9 A DELEGATION FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, HEADED BY CHAI SHU FAN, VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE. THIS VISIT PRODUCED LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE, HOWEVER,

China

11. ALTHOUGH IN A LOYA JIRGAH SPEECH EARLIER IN THE YEAR DADUDD HAD EXPRESSED HIS HOPE FOR "EVER-EXPANDING RELATIONS" WITH CHINA, NOTHING DISCERNIBLE ALONG THESE LINES WAS ACCOMPLISHED DURING 1977. THE CHINESE BRIDGECROSS WERE (WHICH INCLUDES SOME MINOR AID PROJECTS) REMAINS QUITE MODEST -- BUT IS SUFFICIENT TO SYMBOLIZE AFGHAN NEUTRALITY BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PEKING.

12. RELATIONS WITH

PAKISTANI: THE REMARKABLE APPROXIMATEMENT INITIATED THE PREVIOUS YEAR BY DADUDD AND FORMER PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONTINUED THROUGHOUT PAKISTAN'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL UPHEAVAL OF 1977. BHUTTO RECEIVED A CORRECT, BUT RELATIVELY RESTRAINED AND COOL WELCOME DURING A BRIEF JUNE VISIT TO KABUL (SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DOWNFALL), AT WHICH TIME THE GOA SUGGESTED THAT FURTHER DETAILED TALKS ON THE PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE (DECEASED BY THE GOA AS THE "SOLE DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN THE TWO STATES) BE DELAYED UNTIL AFTER THE THEN-EXPECTED PAKISTANI ELECTIONS. SIMILAR UNDERSTANDINGS WERE REACHED LATER WITH GENERAL ZIA-U-HAQ, PAKISTAN'S CHIEF MILITARY LAW ADMINISTRATOR, DURING HIS OCTOBER 19-21 VISIT TO KABUL. HAQ ASSURED THE AFGHANS -- APPARENTLY TO THEIR SATISFACTION -- THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF PAKISTANI SOCIETY NOW SUBSCRIBE TO THE DETENTE WITH AFGHANISTAN. FOR THEIR PART, THE AFGHANS HAVE SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDED ANY SEMBLANCE OF INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PAKISTAN, ALTHOUGH THEY EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION WHEN WALI KHAN WAS RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON AND ALLOWED TO REJOIN THE POLITICAL LISTS.

13. THE SOVIETS HAVE REMAINED OUTWARDLY PASSIVE ABOUT THE AFGHAN-PAKISTANI APPROXIMATEMENT THUS FAR. ON THE OTHER HAND, ITS OFFICIALS IN BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE MADE CLEAR WASHINGTON'S GREAT SATISFACTION OVER THIS DEVELOPMENT WHICH SATISFIES ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT REGIONAL OBJECTIVES.

14. RELATIONS WITH IRAN: DADUDD ALSO FREQUENT ABOUT BETTER RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN'S CULTURAL COUSIN, IRAN, BY SETTLING -- AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT -- A LONG-STANDING ISSUE BETWEEN THE TWO STATES: THE DIVISION OF THE WATERS OF THE HELMAND RIVER. AFTER SENDING HIS BROTHER AND SPECIAL ENVOY, MOMATRAD RAIN, TO TEHRAN TO DO THE WAY, THE GOA EXCHANGED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN ANGOLO INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION FOR THE 1973 HELMAND WATERS TREATY, WHICH HAD BEEN LEFT HANGING IN LIVED AFTER THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN, WHICH HAD NEGOTIATED IT, HAD BEEN DEPOSED BY THE

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NEW REPUBLICAN FRONT. MAIN ALSO SECURED IRANIAN UNDERSTANDING TO WHAT UNTIL THEN HAD BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL FLOOD-CONTROL AND IRRIGATION PROJECT THE AFGHANS WANTED TO LAUNCH IN THE LOWER HELMEND (THIS PROJECT IS NOW IN THE DESIGN STAGE).

15. ON THE DEBIT SIDE, HOWEVER, THE AFGHANS CONTINUED TO PRESENT WHAT THEY -- WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION -- VIEWED AS IRANIAN REDEMANDS ON PAST AID PROMISES. AS THE YEAR ENDED, HOWEVER, BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE INTENSELY, BUT DISCREETLY TRYING TO RESOLVE A SQUABBLE OVER A SMALL DISPUTED SEGMENT OF BORDER NEAR ISLAM QALA ON THE HELMEND-IRRAAT ROAD, IRRITATED BY REPEATED EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN BY THE SHANTOVOR SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE LACK OF AN ASSURED PLAN OF SUCCESSION FOR DAQUD. THE AFGHAN LEADERSHIP COUNTERED AT EVERY APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY BY CITING THEIR OWN WORRIES OVER THE SUCCESSION QUESTION IN IRAN.

16. RELATIONS WITH OTHER STATES: DURING THE FALL, THE GOA RECEIVED A RAPID SUCCESSION OF FOREIGN DIPNITARIES WHOSE VISIT PRODUCED LITTLE OF REAL SUBSTANCE: CUBAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PELEGRIN TORRAS (SEPTEMBER 19-23), HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT PAL LOSONCZI (OCTOBER 15-18), IRAQI VICE PRESIDENT YAHYA MUNI-AL-DIN MATRUFI (OCTOBER 22-25), AND MONGOLIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MANGALYKH DUGERSUREN (OCTOBER 26-30). UPON HIS RETURN FROM THE IRAN SESSION (AND A TOUR OF CALIFORNIA), AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER HAFEEZ ABDULLAH VISITED IRAQ, IRAN, AND VARIOUS PERSIAN GULF STATES (WHERE HE TRIED TO ATTRACT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE LATTER GROUP OF WEALTHY CORRELIGIONISTS). MOST OF THIS FLURRY OF DIPLOMATIC VISITING WAS DESIGNED TO BURNISH AFGHANISTAN'S CREDENTIALS AS AN ACTIVE NON-ALIGNED STATE, AS KABUL AMBITIOUSLY PREPARED TO HOST THE MAY MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE NON-ALIGNED GROUP OF STATES. THE GOA HAS BEEN INCREASING ITS ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT IN SEVERAL AREAS, SUCH AS THE LAWSOFTHE SEA CONFERENCES AND NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC ISSUES. KABUL IS PARTICULARLY EAGER TO IMPROVE THE STATUS OF LAND-LOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND HAS THROUGHOUT 1977 UTILIZED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THIS CAUSE.

17. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED AFGHAN PRESS REPORTED THE PEACE-TALKS ACTIVITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN A THOROUGH AND BALANCED FASHION, THE GOA WARILY CONTINUED ITS LONG-STANDING POLICY OF AVOIDING ANY INVOLVEMENT -- AND HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY CAREFUL IN THIS AREA SINCE SADAT'S BREAK WITH SEVERAL ARAB STATES. THE AFGHANS SEE THEMSELVES AS NON-SEMITIC MUSLIMS, WITH NOTHING TO GAIN BY TAKING ANY STAND OTHER THAN PROVIDING GENERAL LIP-SERVICE TO THE ARAB CAUSE.

18. COMMENT: U.S. INTERESTS IN THE PROMOTION AND PRESERVATION OF REGIONAL STABILITY WERE WELL SERVED DURING THE YEAR BY DAQUD'S RESPONSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OF AFGHAN RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND IRAN. HIS HANDLING OF THE DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR ALSO CONTINUED TO BE DEFT AND ABLE. IN SEVERAL WAYS, AFGHANISTAN'S GEO-POLITICAL SITUATION ROUGHLY RESEMBLES THAT OF FINLAND -- AND DAQUD MANAGES THIS CHALLENGE AT LEAST AS WELL AS, IF NOT BETTER, THAN KENNEDY.

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19. IN ORDER TO SUPPORT AFGHANISTAN'S EFFORTS TO PRESERVE THE LARGEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM SOVIET PRESSURES -- WHICH IS THE PRINCIPAL US POLICY GOAL HERE, WE CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE OUR FRIENDLY AND TANGIBLE INTEREST THROUGH A VISIBLE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THIS COUNTRY. THE STATE VISIT WE HAVE ALREADY PROMISED DAQUD IS THE KEY ITEM ON THE 1979 US-AFGHAN AGENDA.

*David
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